

# **EXHIBIT 18**



# Venezuelan embassy run by opposition in US closes after Guaido ouster

By [Jennifer Hansler](#), CNN

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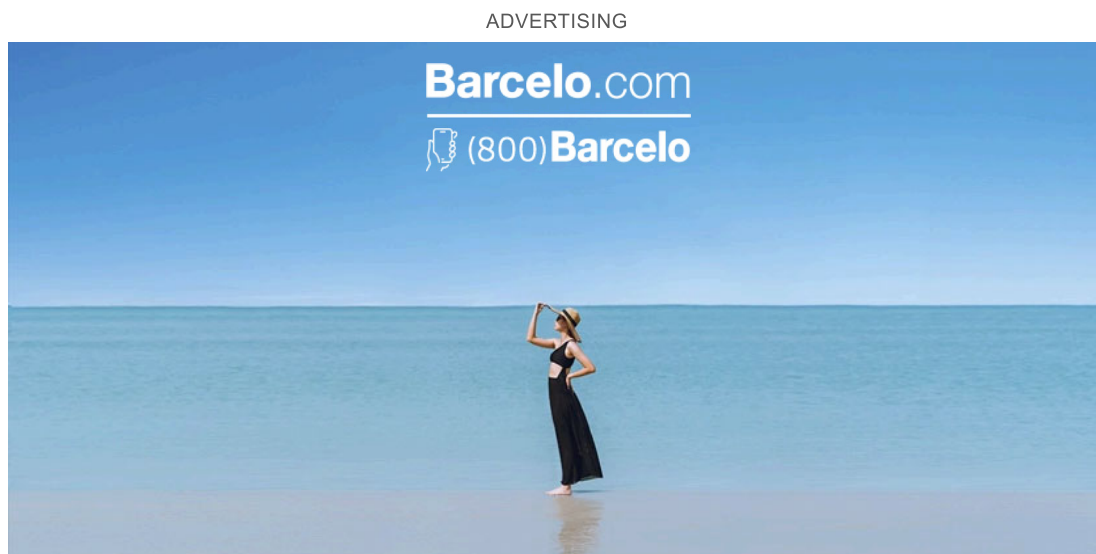
Then Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó's ambassador to Washington, Carlos Vecchio, speaks to the press outside the military attaché's office in Washington DC, on April 30, 2019. NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/AF/Getty Images

**Washington (CNN)** — The Venezuelan embassy in Washington, DC, that was run by the opposition has suspended its operations, it announced in a press release Friday, following [Juan Guaidó's ouster](#) as opposition leader.

"We inform the Venezuelan community in the United States, and the public in general, that the Venezuelan Embassy in the United States and all its officials formally ceased functions on Thursday, January 5, 2023," the press release from the de-facto embassy said.

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“We deeply regret the affectation that this decision may cause our Venezuelan citizens in the United States,” it said.



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All of the officials who worked at the embassy as well their mission to the Organization of American States will remain in the US, a source close to the embassy told CNN, noting that they cannot return to Venezuela for fear of persecution by the regime of embattled Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro.

Carlos Vecchio – who has served as Guaidó’s ambassador to the US and as a leader of the opposition party Voluntad Popular – went into exile in the US in 2014 after Maduro issued an arrest warrant against him.

“Ambassador Vecchio will continue his struggle from abroad and it is expected that in the next few days, he will send a message to Venezuelans,” the person said.

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CNN has reached out to the State Department about the suspensions of operations.



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Lawmakers in Venezuela who were also members of the opposition last Friday voted to end the “interim government” led by Guaidó, and instead designate a Delegate Commission that will oversee the protection of some of the Venezuelan economic assets held by foreign countries.

The press release from the Venezuelan opposition embassy in the US said that the “cessation of functions was decided by the majority of deputies of the National Assembly Elected in 2015 that approved a Statute Law Reform governing the Transition and, unconstitutionally, eliminated the Presidency in Charge led by President Juan Guaidó, the Interim Government, and the Foreign Service, including the Venezuelan Embassy in the United States, led by Ambassador Carlos Vecchio, recognized since 2019 by the U.S. administration.”

Guaidó had served as the US-recognized leader of the country since January 2019, when he declared himself interim president. That recognition of Guaidó led to a complete severing of ties with the official government of Maduro.

Maduro ordered the closure of all of his embassies and consulates in the US in January 2019 in response to the recognition, and the US suspended operations and pulled all personnel from its

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement this week that the US “continues to recognize the democratically elected 2015 National Assembly as the last remaining democratic institution in Venezuela, and we welcome the agreement reached to extend its authority.” That statement did not make any mention of Guaidó.

*This story has been updated with additional details.*

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